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SUBJECT: EU3-IRAN - FRENCH READOUT OF PARIS AGREEMENT

WORKING GROUP MEETINGS, JANUARY 17-18

REF: LONDON 000539 (NOTAL)

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Josiah Rosenblatt, reason 1
.4 B and D

¶1. (C) We met January 24 with MFA A/S-equivalent Director for Strategic Affairs and Disarmament Philippe Carre, who travels to Washington January 26-28 for consultations in the Department, the NSC, and DOD/OSD. In response to our questions on the EU3-Iran January 17-18 talks, Carre gave us a readout similar to the one the British provided to Embassy London (reftel). Carre also noted that the UK would soon be providing a briefing on the Iran talks to the G8.

¶2. (C) Carre confirmed that the workings of the nuclear group were key to the overall talks and that its conclusions took precedence over the other two working groups (political/security and technology cooperation). In this respect, none of the working group meetings produced much, he stated, although he cautioned that this was still among the first in a series of monthly meetings. Based on existing contacts, Carre concluded that the Iranians were not ready to make progress in the nuclear working group. In the political/security group, the EU3 did not go along with Iranian efforts to limit counter-terrorism discussions to just Al-Qaeda and the MEK. In the technology group, the Iranians asked for help with airplane technology, but the EU3 deferred as this was linked to the U.S. embargo on Iran and the EU3 has avoided discussing the U.S. with Iran.

¶3. (C) Returning to the discussions on the nuclear working group, Carre was downbeat on the outcome of talks to date since the Iranians are "not ready or willing to make concessions." He expressed the hope that they could move forward as talks gather momentum and as the Iranians begin to understand that the EU3 is not seeking to create problems for them. For now, Carre added, the EU3 have been very clear on the importance of indefinite suspension. It was also clear, however, that the Iranians would only be prepared to suspend enrichment activities when they are ready, and not in reaction to any "carrots" that the EU3 might offer. During Foreign Minister Barnier's recent visit to Moscow, he discussed Iran with them as the Russians are pushing a similar line on the need for indefinite suspension. "What we are trying to do is to reinforce how serious we are in the EU, but we are uncertain of the outcome of the Iran talks," Carre said.

¶4. (C) Carre ventured that the internal dynamics in Iran are very important -- not everyone in Iran is looking for a successful outcome, while those doing the negotiating have to demonstrate that they haven't given in to the interests of the west. The March elections in Iran are likely influencing the discussions, he added. Meanwhile, with respect to the U.S. approach, French Political Director Laboulaye and his EU3 colleagues are seeking greater U.S. engagement, hence their own trip to Washington this week. The EU3 does not believe that failure of the negotiations is in anyone's interest. While we must remain skeptical of Iranian intentions, skepticism by itself is not a policy, he cautioned.

Leach